

PATRICK-MURRAY ADMINISTRATION TAKES STEPS TO BEGIN AERIAL SPRAYING FOR MOSQUITOES IN SOUTHEASTERN MASSACHUSETTS

Increased risk of Eastern Equine Encephalitis in mosquitoes that bite humans

BOSTON — Saturday, July 31, 2010 – Governor Deval Patrick today announced that planning has begun for aerial spraying of pesticides against mosquitoes as early as Wednesday evening in selected areas of southeastern Massachusetts. State public health officials, working in conjunction with several other agencies and local public health partners, made the decision following continued positive tests for eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) in mosquito samples from that part of the state.

The exact timing and geographical areas to be sprayed are still being assessed, based on mosquito sample surveillance findings, environmental observations, weather conditions and other factors. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) is working with a number of stakeholder agencies in this process, including the Massachusetts Departments of Environmental Protection (DEP), Agricultural Resources (DAR), and Fish and Game (DFG), as well as the State Reclamation and Mosquito Control Board, and locally-based Mosquito Control Projects.

"As a preventative measure, I have directed the Department of Public Health to begin planning for aerial spraying against mosquitoes in select areas in the region next week," said Governor Patrick. "There are a number of precautions that residents can take to keep themselves safe this summer. These include using bug spray and covering up when outdoors, especially during peak mosquito hours of dusk to dawn."

DPH asks cities and towns in the high risk areas to curtail evening events at dusk and dawn. Outdoor events should be rescheduled for different times of the day. Those 17 communities are Acushnet, Berkley, Bridgewater, Carver, Duxbury, Fairhaven, Freetown, Halifax, Kingston, Lakeville, Mattapoisett, Middleboro, New Bedford, Plympton, Raynham, Rochester and Taunton. In addition, 14 other communities are under moderate risk, including: Dartmouth, Dighton, East Bridgewater, Easton, Fall River, Hanson, Marion, Marshfield, Norton, Pembroke, Plymouth, Somerset, Wareham and West Bridgewater. DPH reminds the public, especially in these communities, that even if you are wearing long sleeves and using repellent, it is prudent at this time to take extra precautions.

"This has been an unusual year in terms of persistent hot weather and rainfall conditions," said DPH Commissioner John Auerbach. "We believe there is a significantly higher risk of EEE this year than in years past, but we're hopeful that the prudent use of aerial spraying will decrease that risk, along with people taking care to keep from getting bit by mosquitoes."

Specific details on the exact geographical area and timing of aerial spraying will be announced as soon as they are finalized.

There was one human case of EEE during 2008; however, there were 13 cases with six deaths from 2004 through 2006. EEE is usually spread to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. It is a serious disease in all ages and can even cause death in some cases.

Mosquito testing results from 2009 can be found on the Arbovirus Surveillance Information web page at www.mass.gov/dph/wnv.

People have an important role to play in protecting themselves and their loved ones from illnesses caused by mosquitoes.

Avoid Mosquito Bites

- **Be Aware of Peak Mosquito Hours.** The hours at dusk and at dawn are peak biting times for many mosquitoes. Consider rescheduling outdoor activities that occur during evening or early morning.
- **Clothing Can Help Reduce Mosquito Bites.** Wearing long-sleeves, long pants and socks when outdoors will help keep mosquitoes away from your skin.
- **Apply Insect Repellent When Outdoors.** Use a repellent with DEET (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide), permethrin, picaridin (KBR 3023), oil of lemon eucalyptus [p-methane 3, 8-diol (PMD)] or IR3535 according to the instructions on the product label. DEET products should not be used on infants under two months of age and should be used in concentrations of 30% or less on older children. Oil of lemon eucalyptus should not be used on children under three years of age.

Mosquito-Proof Your Home

- **Drain Standing Water.** Mosquitoes lay their eggs in standing water. Limit the number of places around your home for mosquitoes to breed by either draining or discarding items that hold water. Check rain gutters and drains. Empty any unused flowerpots and wading pools, and change water in birdbaths frequently.
- **Install or Repair Screens.** Keep mosquitoes outside by having tightly-fitting screens on all of your windows and doors.

More information about EEE and EEE risk is available on the DPH website at www.mass.gov/dph/wnv. Information about West Nile Virus (WNV) and EEE is also available by calling the DPH recorded information line at 1-866-MASS-WNV (1-866-627-7968) or the Epidemiology Program at 617-983-6800.

###